

TO: House Committee on General and Housing

RE: H-184

DATE: March 20, 2023

I am writing this letter **urging your committee to support H-184.**

My husband and I are Landlords in Springfield, VT and we own 20 apartments. We provide quality affordable housing for working class people in our community and work with Springfield Supportive Housing and HCRS to provide housing for some of their people. Both agencies require state inspectors to come in and certify that we provide safe housing. We do all our own maintenance. We file the EMP/IRC reports with the state annually. My husband holds a current EPA Lead Paint Certificate and has held a Vermont EMP Certification License since lead paint laws were enacted. He has also completed the new VT Inspection, Repair, and Cleaning (IRC) course and has that certification. **Now however, this certification allows him to only repair 1 SQ. FT in any apartment occupied or not. This is an impossible restriction. Additionally, he has paid the \$300 fee to take the 8 hour Repair, Renovation, Painting and Maintenance class and passed the test.**

BUT, HE STILL CAN NOT LEGALLY REPAIR MORE THAN 1 SQ.FT.

To be clear, we have no problem taking training on best practices for remediating lead paint. We want our tenants to be safe.

We **do have a problem** with the new unnecessary mandates which require the following:

- Pay \$300 RRPM Firm licensing fee (5 years)
- Pay an annual \$50 RRPM Supervisor license fee (we only do our own work -not interested in becoming a professional painter)
- Obtain professional liability painter's insurance with at least \$300,000 in liability coverage (cost approximates \$3000-if you can get it) We already carry a \$1,000,000 liability umbrella policy - but lead paint not included.

To illustrate what this law means in a **REAL LIFE CASE SCENARIO WHICH ACTUALLY HAS HAPPENED:**

Our tenant calls us and reports that there is water and a wet spot appearing on their kitchen wall. This is a pre-1978 house and EMP compliance standards have been observed. We discover that the cause is a leak in the sewer pipe that comes down from the upstairs bathroom. This pipe comes down in the corner of the kitchen and effects about 3.5 sq. feet on each abutting wall – a total of 7 sq. ft. Now, under the new regulations we as landlord are only permitted to touch 1 sq. ft. of painted surface – mind you that we have the training and have passed the test. BUT, we do not have the professional painter's license or the \$300,000 professional painter's liability insurance. Hence, we cannot legally touch these walls. So, we called our plumber. Fortunately, we have a plumber who was willing to come. He walked in, took one look at this painted wall in a pre-1978 house which potentially has lead in it and said I won't touch it unless that wall is opened up so I can get at the pipe.

He does not have the licenses to deal with lead paint nor does he plan to get one. Now, we have a landlord who has the know how but not the license and a plumber who will not touch the problem, and I might add has plenty of business without this job.

Now our legal option is to find a licensed professional painter. As of January 1, 2023 there are less than 35 contractors who have this license statewide – most are in Chittenden County – none in either Windsor or Windham county. Of those that are licensed, most are for large institutions like Middlebury College. Few will even consider hire for private landlords. There are approximately 60,000 apartments in Vermont owned by local landlords. Good luck finding a contractor.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO AS A COMMON SENSE LANDLORD IS THIS CASE?

Please support H-184 so we can go back to common sense regulation and provide affordable, safe housing in Vermont which is so desperately needed. We understand the legislature did not create this problem – the Health Dept did. We appeal to the legislature to fix the problem by supporting this bill.

Walter and Aida Pluss

Springfield, VT